

<p style="text-align: center;">Post-Event Summary Report NATIONAL SILVER-HAIRED CONGRESS</p>
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Event: National Silver-Haired Congress Legislative Session.
Date of Event: February/March 2005.
Location of Event: Washington, DC
Number of Persons Attending: 136 (Includes Delegates from throughout the United States)
Sponsoring Organization: National Silver-Haired Congress
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During its legislative session, the National Silver-Haired Congress adopted 30 of the many recommendations proposed. Delegates then prioritized those recommendations (in the form of Resolutions). The Top Five Resolutions are presented here for consideration during the White House Conference on Aging. These top five Resolutions are:

1. 2005 Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act (OAA)
2. Strengthening the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003
3. Elder Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation
4. Eliminate Tax on Social Security Benefits
5. National Background Check and Registry for Health Caregivers

<p><u>Priority Issue #1</u> Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act (OAA)</p>

Reauthorize the Older Americans Act (OAA) with sufficient funding added to:

- (1) Expand all titles of the OAA to adequately serve the “boomer” seniors, projected to swell the senior population by 17 percent.
- (2) Promote health and disease prevention among older adults.
- (3) Prevent elder abuse and neglect.

Barriers

Existing levels of funding will be insufficient to cover the rising costs and greatly increasing numbers of older, vulnerable adults who will need supportive services. In addition, federal rules and guidelines under the OAA fail to provide enough flexibility to allow agencies at the state and community levels to more reasonably address local needs and consumer choices for seniors

Proposed Solution(s)

Increase funding to ensure adequate resources are available to serve the projected 17% increase in the senior population and provide greater flexibility to states and local entities in the use of OAA funding to meet local needs of the senior population.

Priority Issue #2 Revise Medicare to Reduce RX Drugs Costs.

Primary Concerns: Competitive Pricing (drugs) and Quality Control

Barriers

Pricing: Opposition by Pharmaceutical Companies to any price controls or importation rules which would limit profits. The Veterans Administration is authorized and negotiates significantly lower prices for its members while the Secretary of Health and Human Services is prohibited from negotiating with drug companies.

Quality: The volume of drugs entering the United State is increasing, particularly through the internet, while drug counterfeiting techniques are becoming more sophisticated . The World Health Organization reports that nearly 10% of the world's drug supply is counterfeit, while another study found as much as 50% of the China supply is counterfeit.

Proposed Solution(s)

Authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate the best possible drug prices and, without imposing undue and expensive burdens on participants, legalize importation of prescription drugs which meet the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) standards for use by United States citizens.

Priority Issue #3 Fight Elder Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation!

Each year, there are many elderly persons in the United States abused, neglected, or exploited. The human, social and economic costs of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation are enormous and should be unacceptable. Costs include avoidable expenditures of Medicare and Medicaid funds. These problems will be exacerbated when 78 million baby boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) reach retirement age beginning in 2006.

Barriers

There is no federal law that addresses elder abuse in a comprehensive manner.

Proposed Solution(s)

Congress should assist families, communities and states in the fight against elder abuse, neglect and exploitation by establishing a program analogous to the legislation for child abuse and neglect, domestic violence and violence against women.

Priority Issue #4 Stop Taxing Social Security Benefits!

Senior Social Security recipients previously paid income taxes on the portion of SS taxes (FICA) that was withheld from their wages and salaries. Now, single seniors with incomes

over \$25,000 and married seniors with incomes over \$32,000 are being taxed again on SS benefits, at up to 85 percent of their benefit checks.

Barriers

Unequal treatment under SS laws for employees and recipients. Both employer and employee pay 50% of the FICA tax. The employers are allowed to deduct their portion of the FICA tax when reporting their taxable income; employees are not.

Proposed Solution(s)

The United States Congress should eliminate tax on Social Security benefits paid Senior Social Security recipients.

<u>Priority Issue #5</u> Background Checks & National Registry for Health Caregivers

Problem: There is no National Registry of individuals convicted of abusive actions or serious crimes at nursing homes or home health agencies across America.

Barriers

A National listing of workers in nursing homes with a record of abusing patients is not available for review by institutions prior to hiring a worker. Individuals who have been convicted of abusive actions or serious crimes in one state can travel to another state or from one nursing home or home health agency to another to find work without undergoing an effective criminal background check.

Proposed Solution(s)

The United States Congress should create a National Registry of employees of health care facilities, home agencies and residential care facilities, listing those employees who have been convicted of abusive actions and/or serious crimes.